

4.

CASE STUDY: CAVEMAN'S VALENTINE

"If you were forced to be on the street, isolated, without love, companionship, how long would it take you to lose your mind? And what parts of your mind would you keep if you were there?"

—Samuel L. Jackson

CHAPTER REVIEW

Sam breaks down his performance of two homeless characters with very different personal histories, who deal with their homelessness in opposite ways. Sam uses specific references from people he has encountered or observed throughout his life to inform his portrayal of otherwise unrelatable characters. He also pushes himself to answer a challenging list of questions about a character's psychology, which demonstrates how deep you must go in your characterization process to create a "whole person." This influences his specific acting choices—such as his distinct vocalizations—which are specific and grounded, rooted in both his imagination and given circumstances of the script.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Watch *The Caveman's Valentine* and *Resurrecting the Champ*. How does Sam differentiate both characters? How is his portrayal different or similar to other homeless characters you've seen in movies or on television? What makes Sam's characterization effective?

4.

CASE STUDY: CAVEMAN'S VALENTINE

ASSIGNMENTS

- Find a character who is down on their luck, mentally ill, homeless, or facing a similar condition; find a monologue if possible, even if you have to go outside of your chosen script. Record yourself doing a first read as that character. Then, push yourself to answer Sam's list of questions about how that character would react to their situation:

What are the clothes that you either got from a shelter or that might have been yours?

Do you go to the shelter to eat? Or do you dumpster dive?

Are you that kind of person that would stand on the street and hold your hand out begging for money and holding a sign? Or would you go around, pick up cans and bottles, taking them to the recycling place to get money so you could eat?

If you were a shell of yourself who remembered only fragments of who you once were, what would those fragments be? What are the fragments that you would hold onto if you were forced to be on the street, isolated, without love, or companionship?

Record yourself again. Do you see a difference in the emotional quality of your work? Write down what was different about it. Share both recordings in [The Hub](#).

- Start a character reference notebook. Go out to a public space—like a coffee shop, park, or public transit—and choose a person to observe in detail. Watch them for a few hours, writing every detail about them, including how they're dressed, how they walk, and how they hold themselves. What emotions did their appearance elicit? Create a short backstory of their life. Share your observations with your classmates in [The Hub](#).

4.